

Nature's Choice

Epicor ERP Provides Competitive Edge For Leading Health Food Supplier



Based in South Africa, Nature's Choice has leveraged its partnerships with major retailers and independent stores to become the leading health food supplier to the local market. The company has been in existence for more than 27 years and has established itself as a reputable brand with strong ethics and standards.

Company Facts

Overview

- ▶ Location—Meyerton, Gauteng, South Africa
- ▶ Industry—Health Food Manufacturer
- ▶ Website—www.natureschoice.co.za

Nature's Choice traces its roots back to 1985 when the company was founded as the retail arm of the Natural Health Foundation. The Foundation is a legally constituted non-profit organisation dedicated to public health education. Since 1989, the company has operated as an independently registered Closed Corporation.

From humble beginnings, the company has experienced tremendous growth. Nature's Choice is presently Africa's largest and South Africa's leading health food distributor with more than 1,200 outlets and stockists throughout South Africa, Africa, and a growing number of trading partners overseas.

Success Highlights

Challenges

- ▶ Enhancing the efficiency of the workforce through integrated processes and controls
- ▶ Replacing soon-to-be-obsolete technology
- ▶ Improving customer service through better traceability and inventory management

Challenging business environment

"The market is exceptionally strained at the moment, with consumer spend and confidence at an all-time low," said Gresham Mandy, operations director with Nature's Choice. "The health sector is one where there are always new players entering and where education and communication is key. For Nature's Choice to stay as successful as we have been, we need to continually add value to our loyal clients through keeping abreast of new trends and needs—which translates to constantly adding new and improved products into our take-to-market range."

Solution

- ▶ Epicor® ERP

"In attempt to overcome these challenges—and laying a basis for growth within the company—we were looking for an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that is as adaptable and changeable as our day-to-day environment. We also needed a system that could grow with the business, enhancing go-to-market strategies and customer service—instead of hampering us. We knew that if we could achieve this, we would be doing something right and would reap the benefits."

Benefits

- ▶ Managed business data in real time
- ▶ Fully integrated sales, inventory, and financial management
- ▶ Clearly defined business processes to drive strong communication across business units and provide management-by-exception tools

Making decisions for growth

Before the implementation of Epicor ERP, Nature's Choice was running on a DOS-based system, which was showing signs of expiration on applicability and use—along with limitations becoming more prevalent as Nature's Choice grew as a business. With the rapid improvements on computer hardware, the legacy system also started becoming incompatible with the new hardware that had been acquired.

"Our old system had limitations when it came to stock and inventory movement, debtors and aging on accounts, tracking and traceability, costing of bill of materials (BOM), and stock," said Mandy. "It also did not allow for multi-user application, and only one person on the master desk could load BOMs and do invoicing, which is why we turned to our

local ERP partner and expert—New ERA Solutions Pty (Ltd)—to assist us with advice for the best solution moving forward.”

New ERA recommended Epicor ERP as the best fit, as it allows for full cradle-to-grave traceability, with multi-user capability, real-time inventory management, traceability, integrated financial controls, and a system that can evolve with a company's growth.

“Epicor offered us great reports and access to data that is key to us making decisions for operations, and product BOMs, and sales analyzing,” added Mandy.

“The functionality provided—along with the easy-to-follow look and feel of the system—has created a positive uptake and support from the Nature's Choice users,” Mandy continued.

With Epicor ERP being fully operational throughout the entire business, Nature's Choice is reaping the benefits of available data on run rates, correct costing setups for BOMs, and stock movement. They can generate reports for sales representative performance and agency and customer activity across regions, products, and categories.

“I think we are yet to experience the full functionality of the system, but so far it is looking very good and promising,” stated Mandy.

“The implementation of an ERP system cuts right to the bone of any organisation, as it forms such an integral part of day-to-day operations,” said Mandy. “As such, this is not a journey that any business would want to take on regularly, so it is of the utmost importance that your selected product and partner supports the ultimate goal of future proofing your business.”

Immediate benefits and future plans

Mandy noted, “Although we have a few extra processes that we never had from our old DOS system, the huge advantages of Epicor are being realised through what the system is offering us in information, traceability, costing, and more.”

Nature's Choice is Food Safety System Certification (FSSC) 22000 Certified, which is a robust, ISO-based, internationally accepted certification scheme for auditing and certification of food safety in the whole supply chain.

The FSSC 22000 system was designed to provide companies in the food industry with an ISO-based. Food Safety Management System certification that is recognised by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI).

“At Nature's Choice, we are exceptionally proud of this certification and see it as a testament to our commitment to food safety and quality,” said Mandy. “We are already seeing that Epicor is contributing positively towards the company's growth plans. We can also see how it will help increase revenue when we want to add new products and modules, and it is continually supporting our ISO certification.”

Mandy concluded by saying, “Even though it was a long journey for building and implementing the system, it turned out to be better than expected in the end.”

About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation drives business growth. We provide flexible, industry-specific software designed to fit the precise needs of our manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industry customers. More than 45 years of experience with our customers' unique business processes and operational requirements are built into every solution—in the cloud or on premises. With this deep understanding of your industry, Epicor solutions dramatically improve performance and profitability while easing complexity so you can focus on growth. For more information, [connect with Epicor](#) or visit www.epicor.com.

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